

Testimony in opposition to state bill 374.

My name is Thomas Blake, I am opposed to State Bill 374 as it is a violation of Child Right and Parental rights. I, also, believe it is ,too, subjective to have any merit or measurable results. Mental health assessments are not a medical diagnosis, in fact are the opinion of the person making the assessment. If they follow the diagnosis code how it is written you can have a very well-adjusted person with absolutely no mental health issues diagnosed as Major Depressive just because they had a series of event line up in their past. Just like you can have someone diagnosed as absolutely normal with no mental health issues, again because no series of events lined up in their life.

So now that we know the assessments are not valid let's take a look at how they will be paid for. The State of CT is technically bankrupt, no funds! The Federal government is in even worse financial crisis. Parents are losing health benefits which include mental health services and high deductibles if the plan does cover services. This means the vast majority will not get the benefit of the invalid assessments. The few that can easily pay, the rich, who send their kids to private schools, are not even mentioned in the bill. So at least, they have a means to get out of the assessments.

Since all the mental health bills are a knee jerk reaction to what happened in Sandy Hook, let's examine what may have helped. Everyone in the school system, he was in, knew he had mental health issues. He was a loner and by all accounts he was probably ridiculed and bullied throughout his time in school. He could have easily received help, at that point, by having services available to the school and/or his parents to take advantage of. He, also, did see a therapist and that therapist must have done a mental health assessment, yet, that did not prevent him from doing what he did.

The State has closed many of its mental health facilities for children and teens due to budget issues and other reasons. So, if there are assessments and the children need to get help there is no means in place to handle them getting the help they need. The mental health services that are still available are for a short term basis, 6 to 8 weeks for most programs and group health insurance if it is covered has very extensive limitations on coverage.

Getting back to my initial thought, it is the parent's duty to make sure their children are educated, taken care of physically and mentally, and provided with the essentials in life (food, clothing, heat, shelter, etc.) If there is an issue, we should have charge of taking care of that issue and not have the State say how we must be proactive, reactive or inactive in those decisions.

Please oppose state bill 374